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ON HEARING MUSIC

By COLIN McALPIN

MUSIC is a threefold employment. It involves the composer—he who originates; the executant—he who interprets; and the auditor—he who hears. Though all three might conceivably be rolled into one—where the composer plays his own compositions to himself, or into two—where the executant plays to some one else pieces he himself has written; they represent, nevertheless, three discreted functions that can never be otherwise than separate and distinct.

With the other arts, however, it is different. You can look at a picture without the intervention of what we might term the 'middleman' in art. Though a poem may be recited or a drama played, in neither case do you need the interpreter as in music. You can read your Shakespeare in a sense in which you cannot read your Beethoven. Even if a highly trained musician can sit down with a piece of music or full orchestral score and hear it inwardly as he scans the pages, music, to be fully realised as originally intended, depends on the mediate office of one or more performers. If it is really to arrive, music must be sung or played.

And one serious implication of this particular fact is that music can be either made or marred by an adequate or inadequate performance. Indeed, some mediocre music may be made to sound quite plausibly pleasing by reason of the excellence of the artist; whilst, conversely, beautiful music may be cruelly murdered by a crude interpretation.

Music, then, must pass from the composer, through the artist, to the auditor. And this division of labour—to call it such—makes music an eminently social art.

But the fact that music must be so mediated is in itself a further source of danger. For we are tempted to concentrate our attention too much on the artist—to pay too great heed to the way in which the music is rendered. Hence, many come to regard the performance of music as more a challenge to criticism than an occasion for uplift and enjoyment. They are apt to forget that it is the ideas—not to speak of their artistic influence—that ultimately matter. They say, "So and so sang

well," not that "The song was inspiring." They ask, "Who is going to play?" not "What is going to be played?" With such the performer is everything, the programme nothing. They degrade the concert to the level of a mere performance. It is to them but an exhibition of virtuosity, but a test of skill in execution—a vain display of bare technique. Hence, a top-note is of more importance than a high-minded melody; a rapid passage on an instrument is of more account than a swiftly-telling phrase.

It needs but little imagination to realise the kind of influence that such an attitude has upon the self-consciousness of the artist. He becomes simply an entertainer—a kind of conjurer who juggles with sounds before an astonished audience. Hence it comes about that on the platform it is too often a case of "See what I can do," rather than "Hear what I have to say."

So, in a sense, it is unfortunate that music must be thus mediated through a secondary personality—the executant. For the latter has to appear in person. And the unmusical are thereby tempted to concentrate on the individual in question. They fasten their attention on some idiosyncrasy of the player, or on some mannerism of the singer. They fall ready victims to one or another casual distraction. Could we but screen the performer from view, and so eliminate the personal element, perhaps our hearing would be of a less adulterated quality. But such a situation would probably make music a thing too abstract and remote. The majority of people love the obvious; and to such the visible appearance of the artist comes as a boon. They can at least lay hold of something tangible and apparent.

Certain it is that the presence of a pleasing personality not unusually enhances the effect of the music. Graciousness of bearing and expressiveness of manner most surely help to recommend the efforts of the artist. Nevertheless, while fully alive to the value of personal magnetism, there is still a fatal tendency to transfer our interest from the music to the exponent.

The case, however, is different with the operatic singer. Here the artist is not only a singer, but a character as well. Not only has the music to be expressed, but a specific rôle has to be sustained. Personality here becomes a very real concern—it is part and parcel of the plot. Too often, however, the operatic artist charms the ear, but fails to captivate the eye.

On the other hand, poetry and painting do not suffer a like disability. If they did, then a poem or picture, which had

to be interpreted by some one else, might—equally with music—fail to capture the undivided mind. Indeed; if not so much the recital of poetry, then assuredly the theatrical representation of a play tends to divert the attention from the dramatic text.

Still, we cannot afford to despise the artist; we cannot safely disregard the value of a good performance. The only trouble is that execution is too often made an end in itself; whereas good singing and dextrous playing are but means to ends that are esthetic. And if beautiful ideas are beautifully expressed, then artist and audience alike should be lost in the music of the composer. We ought, in short, to listen only to the ideas, forgetful, in a sense, of both performer and performance. Good music should insist entirely on itself, nor tolerate, for a moment, the intrusion of the artist.

But our present business is to discuss, in detail, the attitude of the auditor alone—the difficulties that beset the listener, and what exactly is expected of him who hears. We shall concentrate, therefore, specifically on the general outlook of the music-lover who would reap the fullest benefit from the point of view of audience.

Be it said at once that the capacity to receive intelligently the message of music cannot be overrated. Musical appreciation is a gift of undoubted excellence. It is an art not very far removed from creativeness itself. Indeed, a good listener is himself a kind of composer. He creates anew in his inner consciousness the inspirations of genius. As he hears aright, he unifies within himself the flow of notes and flux of chords, transient in the mind. Yet, to many unenlightened minds, in hearing music you have only to let a stream of dulcet sounds pass through one ear and out of the other without leaving the slightest deposit of enrichment in the soul.

Further, in these days of educational facilities, we have a whole host of capable executants; but it is extremely doubtful whether those who affect appreciation can boast a like number of equal quality.

Truth to tell, in practically all our musical institutions much time and trouble are taken in turning out proficient performers, but little in cultivating the taste and inward appreciation. Why not, in these times of artistic bewilderment, a chair of musical esthetics? Such a faculty for guidance would surely not be ill-advised.

But the reason for this needless neglect is not far to seek. Most of us like to do something; it redounds to our credit. We

gain thereby appreciation, not to say applause. And that appeals to a common weakness in our humanity. Unlike poet or painter, the musical performer is, in the nature of the case, very much in the public eye; whereas members of the audience take—vulgarly speaking—a ‘back seat.’ Hence, one of the dangers of music—if not as to its nature then as to its circumstance—is that of egotism, an inordinate sense of self. So it comes about that the humble, though none the less musical, soul who sits as one of many in the concert-hall, does not get the credit he so richly deserves. In short, we make bold to state that a really good listener is almost as rare as a really great artist.

Now, whilst it is perfectly true to say that any one can listen to music, it is equally untrue to say that any one can appreciate it. This despite the fact that many regard music as the one, of all the arts, which makes the least appeal to our artistic intelligence. Dr. Johnson, for instance, regarded music as an exercise making but little demand on the intellect of the hearer, whilst contributing not a little to the self-gratulation of the artist. On once being told that a piece was difficult, he expressed the wish that it might have been impossible.

Furthermore: it is doubtful if even the expert executant is quite so good an auditor as he who, whilst incapable of doing anything himself, is natively endowed with an intuitive love of music. Indeed, many executants are notoriously bad listeners: they too often lay themselves out to criticise rather than enjoy. Though unable to explain the merits of a piece, the untutored amateur may, with musical instinct alone, sense inwardly its manifold beauties of expression. He has, moreover, no ‘school’ to favour, no ‘style’ to espouse, no prejudices to overcome. In consequence, his taste is often purer, and his judgment, not un seldom, more unerring than that of the most cultured musician.

Again: the musical expert may know all about the technical difficulties surmounted, all about the theoretic constitution of the music played; but that in itself is a possible source of danger. It renders him liable to concentrate on structure and technique, rather than on the underlying meaning of music. Indeed, many a learned professor has so fastened on the science of his art as to deaden his soul to the spontaneous freshness of inspired beauty. The academic theorist, therefore, is not unusually less near the essence of music than many a simple soul whose heart beats instinctively in happy unison with the measures of the art. Similarly, the unsophisticated are generally truer

in their estimate of their fellows than are the most erudite casuists. Though we in no wise despise the intellectual grasp of musical beauty that comes of thoughtful study, there is always a possibility of the student degenerating into the 'literalist.' And the letter it is that kills; whereas the spirit—that to which art peculiarly belongs—gives life.

So much, then, for our preliminary remarks. Now for the hearing of music alone.

Generally speaking, music—to the average amateur—is but a pleasing accompaniment to fleeting fancies that dissipate, rather than discipline, the energies of the mind. He regards it as some form of entertainment, scarcely worthy of serious consideration. So far as the philomusical philistine is concerned, we play to while away the time or give a fillip to vapid conversation. The modern conjunction of music and meals is symptomatic of the truth.

But it is assuredly not enough merely to listen; we should attend to what we hear. Something very real is expected of us. We who hear have a duty to what is heard. We should take trouble; it would greatly repay. The proper enjoyment of music should entail an effort of the will. To be in a passive condition of listless receptivity is to nullify the power of the art. We should, in reality, give as close attention to what we hear as does the pianist who adequately accompanies a song. And the higher the music, the greater the need for attentiveness.

We think otherwise, however, because our attendant state of mind cannot be so decisively checked as when we listen—say—to a lecture. And yet we say we have enjoyed the music, but seldom ask ourselves whether we have understood it. Perhaps it were too ideal to suggest that classical music calls for a certain amount of self-preparation. Yet only think of it—a symphony that has taken probably months to write is given less than an hour's casual attention.

We conclude, then, that the musical layman, generally speaking, hears the sound but not the music. He is conscious of the medium, but not of the message, of music. But music, though dependent on, is something more than, sound: though it is primarily an appeal to sense, it has meaning as well. It is something more than a "concourse of sweet sounds." This is merely the sensuous, and therefore the lowest, aspect thereof. A composer *thinks* in music. A melody, for instance, may be viewed as but a pleasing succession of notes; yet it is the specific mode of sequence, stamped as it should be with the impress

of the composer's personality, that makes it exactly not a mere mechanical succession of sounds. But the esthetic 'overplus' that emerges from such a melody, thus impressed, is just what escapes the inner ear of the dilettante.

In view of the foregoing, an analysis of the different types of hearers will help to clear up our position, and pave the way for a better understanding of our subject.

And for purposes of illustration we might divide them into three classes:—(a) Those who hear only with the ear, (b) those to whom music makes peculiarly an intellectual appeal, and (c) those whose faculty of appreciation resides more expressly in the soul.

To take them in the order thus enumerated, the first need not detain us beyond a passing remark. As they obviously do not take music seriously, neither need we take them seriously. Their ultimate court of appeal is an entirely aural one. They form their judgment on sensuous impressions alone. They regard music simply as sensorial stimulation. They dote on musical comedy, love the sickly ballad, and hear the classics with a weariness of spirit. Music which calls for close attentiveness is here out of the question. Given a titillative tune with strong insistent rhythm, and you dispose of this class of hearers at once. They may have the proverbial 'ear for music,' but to the inner soul's response they are utter strangers. Incapable of deep musical feeling, they are out merely to be pleased; and there the matter ends.

But of the second class, which embraces those whom we might term the intellectualists or formalists, more must be said. They are nearer the artistic truth. For, over and above the mere act of audition, they add attention to the *method* of music—the mould in which it is cast. They follow the melody as it threads its way, like delicate tracery, through the interlacing music. They are conscious, in varying degrees, of the balance of melodic periods: they are artistically alive to the intricacies of thematic treatment, which they follow as they would some subtle argument. They are aware—consciously, if initiated; subconsciously, if uninitiated—of the presence or absence of musical form, whereby a movement gains or loses in unity and balance, purpose and design.

To such, music of a contrapuntal character makes especial appeal. And to hear—say—one of Bach's fugues for the organ, as its majestic periods are being rolled out in some vaulted cathedral, is to know the fine fascination that comes of architectural symmetry in music. In short, we have in this class of music-

lovers the sense of form and faculty of analysis highly pronounced and developed.

But, apart from the learned theorist, it might well be asked: Who consciously follows form in music, or takes pains to acquaint himself with the constructional design which the music purports to adopt? Very few indeed! Neither need we be seriously disturbed on this account. Though the intuitive amateur can give no scholastic reasons for the pleasure he derives from the formal fitness of absolute music, or the displeasure occasioned by music that is discursive, we must never forget that form is of lesser account than content, even as intellect is of smaller concern than feeling in matters appertaining to the artistic. Form is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is merely the best way of expressing emotion, and is as the physical configuration of the incorporeal soul. It is excellent as far as it goes, but is not of prime importance.

This brings us to the third class of auditors, who seem to be on higher ground still. For here we pass from intellectual apprehension to that innate sympathy of soul which is most of all in sweet accord with the genius of all true art—and especially with music. Here we have those rarer souls to whom the interior spirit of music makes instant appeal—that particular spirit to which all modes of form and methods of treatment are but tributary and ancillary. And they are really the genuine lovers of music who experience to the full such spiritual raptures, such higher flights of aspiration and enthusiasm, as are to be found in utterances of the inspired masters.

But in perfect musical beauty the appreciative attributes of all three classes should be wisely correlated and happily combined. We cannot but hear music with the ear; but we should also understand it with the mind, and most certainly appreciate it with the soul. And here we have what might be termed, respectively, the bodily, mental and spiritual phases of musical apprehension—albeit variously mixed in different individuals. Neither do they coexist on equal terms; but represent, as it were, three stages of an ascending scale of merit—if not of the very historical rise of music itself.

Needless to say, we find a varied disposition of the musical elements in the great composers themselves. Schubert, for instance, despite his beauty of ideas, is too prolix and diffuse. He lacks the formulating faculty of a Bach. Beethoven, on the other hand, of all the classicists, achieves the triple function of pleasing the ear, contenting the intellect, and satisfying the

soul. In his music we find a perfect balance of the intellectual and sympathetic faculties—an equipoise of form and feeling, sense and soul.

But what, after all, do we exactly mean by listening intelligently to music—by ‘understanding’ it? Why is the hearing of music so often regarded as the least exacting of all artistic activities? To answer fully such a pertinent question we must, first of all, indulge in a little self-analysis.

If we carefully examine our personal experience when listening—say—to a Beethoven symphony, the first thing we notice is that our attention is liable to waver and our interest apt to flag. Our ideas have a tendency to fluctuate and our thoughts are prone to wander. Though still conscious of hearing the music, vagrant visions crowd the imagination with alarming rapidity and irresponsible fickleness. The mind alights now on this, now on that, object of quite indifferent interest, in a way that does not usually happen—for instance—at the opera, where scenes and visible enactments tend to pin us down to a fixed and rigid observation. Indeed, concentration, as such, is the last thing the ordinary concert-goer seems capable of; rather is he thrown involuntarily into a kind of day-dream, or what is popularly known as a ‘brown study.’

Yet is this the fault of the mind or of the music? In any case, music, in the main, has not the same power of riveting the thoughts as a picture which fixes the mind in space and delimits the area of attention. And to confine is to concentrate; and concentration is attention.

Yet it can be truthfully said that only those who listen attentively to, and sympathetically appreciate, music really hear it. It is, however, a psychological problem which goes far deeper than the superficial distractions previously discussed. It is one which at this point should be elucidated.

In the first place, music suffers from its own superiority. It is a victim of its virtue. Being the freest of the arts, it is—for that reason—the least binding on the imagination. It seems to leave untouched the upper levels of the mind, and play about the transmarginal consciousness of man. It invades the cryptic chambers of the spirit: it unlocks the storehouse of the secret soul. It is the artistic appeal to the subliminal in man. It is, in short, the subconscious becoming conscious—the esthetic emergence of the inmost self.

Roughly speaking, music is a kind of hypnotic induction whereby dormant ideas leap to light, slumbering enthusiasms

are fired afresh, and buried memories are excited into being. Indeed, beautiful music literally 'en-trances' us. And it is held by some that hypnosis is facilitated, if not actually induced, even by sound alone.

Hearing music, therefore, is more akin to dreaming than waking:—a dream, however, in which we wake to higher realities unseen—a dream wherein we seem to sense the spiritual values of another world. Hence those strange and indeterminate feelings which music awakens: hence its power to quicken into vivid imagery the dim experiences of the past, and kindle anew the long-lost loves and joys private to the heart of him who hears. And though these are the accidents, rather than the essence, of music, they are, nevertheless, customary concomitants of the musical consciousness which tend unduly to side-track the attentive mind.

In other words: music lets go entirely the world around. It loses its hold on things terrene, only to find its anchorage in the deeper realms of thought. Hence its capacity to stir into livingness fresh depths of personality dormant in the presence of other forms of beauty. And the comparative modernity of music, with its ethereality and fineness of structure, coincides with the comparative modernity of the subliminal self as a discovery and reëmergence of the occult potencies of mind. Is it that music has helped to quicken the "abyssal depths of personality"? Who can tell? True it is that music—voicing, as it does, the larger personality—has ever been the attendant art of prophecy and spiritual unfoldment.

But there is a more obvious reason still which will help to explain at once the intrusion of unsolicited distractions. Music, in the nature of the case, is the most interior and spiritual of the arts. In other words, it is the most abstract type of beauty. And the abstract always makes greater demand on concentrated attention than does the apparent. You have only to discuss some recondite subject when the average mind almost immediately relaxes its hold on the matter to hand. Slowly, but surely, it wearies, tires of sustained effort of attention, and ultimately fails to be interested. Discuss, however, some obvious fact in experience, and the mind becomes at once attentive and alert. In other words, moods in music are not like definite modes of thought: they are nearer akin to abstract ideas which of their very nature are more difficult to follow.

But be it observed in passing—the mind wanders most during (what is theoretically termed) episodic writing, wherein

the subject-matter is unfolded and developed. When, however, some telling theme arrives, some arresting motive returns, the attention is immediately recalled. And this because melodic ideation is the more pointed and positive part of music, and more to the musical purpose. In consequence, melody more readily holds the field of the wakeful mind than does harmony, which seems rather to hover about the fringe of musical thought.

Music, then, being made up of such fine material, suffers from the disability we experience when listening to some abstruse argumentation. Being abstract (in, of course, the esthetic sense), it naturally calls for closest attention on the part of the audience. That is to say, being the most subjective of the arts, music presents us with no definite object, no tangible idea on which to stay the mind. Hence, at the very outset, our thoughts are tempted to stray.

On the other hand, our attention is more easily focussed on an object of plastic beauty. It tells us something; it appertains to knowledge, and is based on facts. Here the mind must, of necessity, converge on some palpable thing of experience. Indeed, the definite shape of sculpture and implicit objectivity of painting are certain challenges to concentration. Being built of more substantial stuff than immaterial music, they naturally make a smaller demand on the powers of application. In short, the more phenomenal the art, the more—like scientific thought—is it sharp in consciousness.

Architecture, again, is a like example. It stares us in the face: we cannot get away from it. But it is even more angular and geometric, more clearly defined in space, and so invites a still more keen inspection. Though, like music, it lays no claim to intellectual content, its very external bulk and mass arrest attention.

These latter esthetic instances, moreover, remain the same all the while we behold them. Here there are no processes of thought to follow, as in the mellifluous progression of music. It is just this transience of the tuneful art—not to speak of its tenuous texture—that makes attentive hearing somewhat of a strain to all but the most musical. For where we have simultaneity in space, concentration is facilitated; but where we have continuity in time, concentration is made more difficult. The very fixity of plastic beauty helps enormously to hold the attention.

Again: the sense of unity makes for mental cohesion. Hence, a picture, which is instantaneous in appeal and unific as to its

aspect, grips at once the imagination of the spectator. A painting hangs before us already complete, compounded and compact; whereas music is continually passing in and out the mind.

Further: music and poetry share alike this quality of movement. In the case of poetry, however, the mental demands seem still more exacting. For here we have to gather up the sense, as well as build afresh the pictures in the mind. We have to reconstruct in the inner consciousness, from verbal symbols of the printed page, the scenes and incidents described. We pass, in short, from stable and external vision to fluent and internal verbalism. Yet even here there is no such play about the confines of our consciousness as in music, since we have in poetry a possible procession of mental objects, of inward pictures—something tangible upon which the mind can fasten, something which of its very nature conduces to sustained and focalised interest. Hence, many would listen attentively to a song, on account of the words, where they would not listen attentively to a pianoforte solo. Nevertheless, the panoramic passage of presentative ideas, however beautiful, tends to tire the interior vision of the mind. In other words, there is always a greater call on consciousness in attending to what is transient in time, than to what is permanent in space. And music's restless flood is ever on the move. When hearing music of a certain type we seem to be beside some purling brook whose constant ripples lull the soul to rest.

True it is, that some master-musicians are capable of appreciating, in a very real sense, the music they hear; whilst, at the same time, there runs a counter-stream of thinking which has no vital connection with the musical matter to hand. But these are rather instances of the highly trained thinker who, whilst hearing understandingly some learned discourse, can yet permit of a running commentary to course through the deeper consciousness like an intellectual 'aside.' It is as though the man were the happy possessor of some dual consciousness—some kind of mental bifurcation.

But this is possible only for the expert, and belongs to one of the many mysteries of the highly evolved mind. For the generality of the musical public it merely means undisciplined discursiveness. Hence the composers, so that their tuneful arguments might carry more weight and cogency of appeal, have built their music in accordance with some formulated scheme—the ripened fruit of a historic evolution. As a remedy for—shall we say—possible inattention, they have reared a supraliminal

structure of logical development over and above the subliminal storehouse of unregulated rhapsody and bemused musicality. At the hands of the classicists music thus becomes at once more methodised and coherent, and so easier of apprehension.

The practical advice we would give the average auditor is as follows. Acquaint yourself beforehand with the 'subjects' employed by the composer. It will leave you freer to follow the trend of the tuneful discussion, as you would the fortunes of some fictional hero. Fasten, again, tenaciously on the principal themes, as if they were the 'headings' of a discourse or the characters in a plot. This will help to stave off the inevitable temptation to relax. For motives in music are points in an argument: melodies are personalities in a play.

Furthermore: acquire some previous knowledge of the 'plan' of the piece which is to claim your attention. That will help the sequent thoughts to fall more happily into place, and change an otherwise clashing chaos of ideas into a fitness in design. It will, in short, regulate your hearing, and bind the whole in a satisfying unity of purpose.

In addition to this, you will be conscious of the cumulative effects of music. What you hear will have an increasing interest as the unfolding harmonies pursue their course. As the primary subject returns upon itself, it will do so—as in the sonata—with added emphasis and power, following on, as it does, the tortuous windings of expository thought.

But this, of course, applies to absolute music—such as the symphony or concerto—rather than to the song or opera, which is relative music, the constructional device of which must perforce be subservient to the words and evolvment of the plot.

Now, what we have already been saying implies the radical distinction between feeling and thought. For feeling is not something you can picture to yourself; it does not take definite shape in consciousness. We cannot *imagine* it as we can some poetic description, since the very word itself implies the presence of an image in the mind. If we can use the word 'imagine' at all in connection with feeling, it is in the sense of a kind of sympathetic attunement. The truth is, the rising scale of beauty represents the gradual diminution of definitude—from the solid forms of painting, through the facts of poetry, up to the rarefied feeling of music. And we are more liable to mental aberration when dealing with the vague and inexact than when confronted with the more definite things in life.

But, since music is the expression of feeling, it must perforce—in at least its higher reaches—excite into being just such ineffable modes of consciousness, just such indefinite motions of the spirit, as go to make up the more interior life of man.

Does that mean, then, that in hearing music we register within ourselves but vague disturbances of mind? Does it mean that we are but the passive recipients of vacuous flutterings of the emotions? Not at all: on the contrary. The express mission of music, when rightly heard, is to take hold of the indescribable sentiments, the unpicturable feelings of the soul, and make them keen and vivid in the mind.

Or again: does it mean that we must pay heed solely to the formal figuration and melodic play of notes, irrespective of the underlying current of emotion? By no means! There are, in reality, two aspects of musical awareness. The one is the very explicit music itself; the other, the implicit, though vaguer, excitation of soul. And the former—its outward manifestation—is definite; whilst the latter—its inward significance—is indefinite.

But to be fully alive to the music you hear, you must allow the composer to guide you through the wandering mazes of your passional life—you must allow him to control the fluctuations of your emotional experience, nor fly off at a tangent after vain conceits and idle vagaries that tempt the listless mind. Thus, and only thus, can you discipline the heart and regulate the soul.

So to hear music with the ear, or even with the intellect, is not enough. We should hear it in the heart, and appreciate it with the character. We should, in short, *feel* it. We do not see a picture only with the eye: we do not get the best out of poetry by merely understanding it. Music, at root, is really depth of feeling. Its final appeal is not to sense; nor does it address itself primarily to knowledge. Indeed, the knowing faculty, as such, enters but little into the activity of appreciation. Ultimately, music is more a question of sympathy than scholarship. It holds high converse with our humanity alone. Consequently, what we admire is really—in a very subtle sense—a judgment on ourselves. And though this is true of all things appertaining to the beautiful, it is peculiarly true of music which lays far greater stress on the heart than on the head.

But perhaps 'understanding,' in this connection, is not the most suitable term to apply: 'appreciation' is probably better. We might know all about, and fully 'understand,' the proportional

properties of a cathedral, and yet be wholly insensible of its structural beauties. Similarly: to be versed in all the lore of the classics, is not necessarily to save the musical soul alive. The end of science is to know: the aim of philosophy is to understand. But art seeks to go beyond mere knowledge, and strives to transcend the understanding. Here we do not so much comprehend with the intellect, as apprehend by intuition. And the highest things we may not know, but still appropriate. In the realm of art we live, as it were, by faith. Beauty trusts us, and we trust beauty.

Yet the only external proof we have of the presence of musical appreciation is that which lies in the capacity to remember certain phrases of the music heard. This is by no means final; this, in itself, is not nearly enough. We may say we feel the same with respect to certain kinds of music; but feelings vary according to the artistic status of the hearer. The fact is, we differ so much in degrees of intensive feeling. And there is here no means of measuring depth of emotion or height of aspiration. Of the inner experience of the auditor we can know but little. Hence the problem of musical appreciation. When, however, a debate (for instance) is heard, the understanding of it can be proved by a faithful rehearsal of the argument—the points raised and conclusions arrived at.

But here we are up against the sundered poles of exact thinking and esthetic emotion. For we either understand a mathematical computation, a geometric problem, or we do not. There are here no lights and shades as in painting, no nuances of thought as in poetry, no graduations of feeling as in music. An argument can be verified: a disputation may result in some definite conclusion. By the inviolable laws of logic they can be registered identically in different minds. It is, however, otherwise with music. Indeed, music is precisely not exact thinking. Hence the divergences of opinion, and varieties of appreciation, with regard to the same composition.

On the other hand, plastic beauty has more of mental exactitude about it; whilst poetry cannot really exist apart from definite ideation. The fact is, the specifically mental element of knowledge is more needed in painting, more necessary in poetry, than in the case of music. Consequently, there is no art like music where so much is left to the imagination—to the play of personality and creative freedom of the spirit. Much is left to the seer of a picture, more to the reader of a poem, but most of all is left to the hearer of music.

So it was never more truly said than of music that we get out of it what we bring to it of ourselves. And some bring their griefs and disappointments, some their joys and gratitude, some—alas!—their shallow search for pleasure; but one and all bring themselves—their lives of varying quality and worth.

No art, then, relies so much for its ultimate effect on the recipient as does music. To one the duet in *Tristan and Isolde*—for instance—is unequivocal eroticism; whilst to another it is ideal romanticism. Still, all art suffers a change as it passes through the alembic of personality. Yet unlike plastic beauty, which is an appeal from without, music appeals at once to ourselves. It is, therefore, more highly coloured by the character through which it passes: it absorbs more of the nature through which it is mediated. Not so, however, exact thinking. Two and two make four in every mind, despite some acrobats of the mental world.

But what, after all, do we really mean when we say we ‘understand’ music? To which we put a counter-question: What do we mean when we say we ‘understand’ a person? For music, with its rich fund of subjectivity, more nearly affects the deeper self in each one of us than does any other form of beauty. So the understanding of music is analogous to the understanding of a personality, with its secret sentiments and private play of motives.

We can truthfully say we understand another soul when we take on, as it were, his personal feelings in the matter. Yet not—be it said—through the analytical brain, but in and through the discerning ‘heart.’

In music, then, we understand through sympathy: we know through love. It exercises itself in and through community of interest. Sympathy is more deeply discriminating, love more profoundly penetrating, than is the intellect. Music, by parity of reasoning, is more searching than any other mode of art. Music is the voice of pity, the mouthpiece of passion. So when we hear it understandingly we absorb, so to speak, the hopes and fears of a fellow-mortal; we are in deep accord with some other soul. We identify ourselves with a pulsing personality; and in this specific sense we may be said to esthetically ‘understand.’ It matters, therefore, very much what kind of music we listen to; even as it does the kind of personal influence under which we come.

The root of the matter lies in this—that conjoined with the musical faculty, as such, there must be a nature stocked

with lively feeling and vivid emotion. Conversely: feeling alone is not sufficient; feeling must be wedded to faculty. Yet, whatever else be said, we must appropriate the music we hear—make it unreservedly our very own—if it is to fulfil its ultimate mission to the soul. We must, in short, live it over again; literally *be* it as it sprang warm with ardour, fresh with enthusiasm, from the heart of the composer.

So the wisest counsel we can give to those who would hear music aright is:—Think of it in terms of **LIFE**, feel it in the depths of **EXPERIENCE**. Let the joys and sorrows that have stirred the composers to audible beauty be yours for a season. You will then find your humanity deepened, your sympathies broadened, beyond your accustomed wont.

Music speaks to those who live deeply. And he who is at grips with the eternal realities will, if tunefully endowed, in no wise content himself with the vapid vapourings of a passing mood; but will take to heart more seriously the diviner sympathy that is resident in the soul of music. He will meet with something akin to a sacred satisfaction—its motives of pity and its melodies of love. He will realise that genuine music deepens for him the innate qualities of spirit that endure, and enhances the diviner values which make of life a thing of supreme importance. After hearing great and noble music you can never be quite the same, for you have drunk of beauty that is eternal.

So it is not so much to the constitution of the art that we would call attention, as to something deeper—all such perennial passions as beat in the soul of music. Hence, it is for just those who have drunk more deeply of the wells of experience, who have tasted life more fully, that the composers have wrought their symphonies and songs. For the storm-tossed Wagner, the blighted Beethoven, and many another strong, melodious soul, knew all too well the changeful fortunes of man's chequered life.